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Fulbright's Ideas Echoed

WASHINGTON — The latest round of Fulbright hearings produced only witnesses friendly to the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

While it was obviously gratifying to Senator Fulbright to hear his own ideas eloquently echoed by brilliant scholar-diplomats like Princeton's George F. Kennan and Harvard's Edwin O. Reischauer, he had no reason to think that their views were having any more impact on the Commander in Chief than Fulbright's own passionate protest against the war.

Neither the chairman nor the witnesses were bound by the subject of the hearings. Sometimes Fulbright simply thought aloud. When retired Gen. James P. Gavin was before him, the chairman was reminded of what another general had said about the sinister forces menacing the country.

"I think Eisenhower was right about the military - industrial complex taking control," he said, "and I don't know what to do about it."

He mused about the vast amount of money being spent by government agencies to propagandize Americans at home: the CIA dole to students, the films made by the Department of Defense, the books subsidized by the U. S. Information Agency.

But even if he thinks that the President is not listening, Fulbright hopes that the country is, and he believes the hearings are educating the public.

Besides education, his motive is expiation. Sen. Fulbright finds it hard to forgive himself for not inquiring into the origins and justice of the war before the administration had escalated the commitment to 400,000 ground troops, and it was indeed too late.

He is mortified still that the academicians began their teach-ins during the winter of 1965, a full year before the Senate Foreign Relations started its inquiry.

Henry Steele Commager, the doughty historian who fervently shares the senator's view that "all isms change," levelled the accusation the senator finds hardest to bear: The professor lamented that "immensely important decisions had been taken without congressional debate or public debate . . . Sometimes I think great decisions are made not surreptitiously, but absent-mindedly, and we get into these extraordinary positions, then our pride is involved and our self-interest is involved."

The senator is determined to try to avert any more "absent-minded decisions," if such these were, and he quizzed his articulate witnesses about the proper composition of the negotiating principals if the moment ever comes in Vietnam, about the most fruitful attitude towards China and other general subjects that came under

der the loose heading of "Asia, the Pacific and the U. S."

It is his hope that when these questions are ripe for decision, the public will have been clued in by his hearings and will make their opinion known to the Executive Department. It is, of course, the

long way around, but says the senator, who used to have an affect on the President, "I don't know what else to do."

Meanwhile the President's attitude has hardened further. The bombings have been resumed and with new intensity. The olive branches have all withered.